



## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers January 3, 2008

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **South Dakota Bars Use Sticky Notes To Remind Patrons To Drive Home Safely**

The South Dakota Office of Highway Safety is partnering with more than 25 bars and restaurants over the holidays to remind patrons to find a safe way home. Participating locations place sticky notes with the message "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk" on their tabs at the end of the night. "It's just a nice, not so in your face way to let them know that they don't need to be drinking and driving," a bar manager said. For more information, go to

<http://www.keloland.com/News/NewsDetail6371.cfm?Id=0,64575> Source: KELO TV, December 22, 2007

#### **Ohio Officers Focus Patrols on Days before Christmas**

Law enforcement officers in Columbus, Ohio dedicated drunk driving patrols on the Friday and Saturday before Christmas after an analysis showed a spike of arrests those days. Officers attribute some of the increase to "novice drinkers" who hit the road after celebrating too much at office parties. Last year county-wide drunk driving arrests averaged three on a workday in the evening, but rose to nine the Friday before Christmas. Officers cautioned that drivers don't need to be at .08 blood alcohol content or above to be considered impaired. "You can go out, not be drunk, and still be pulled over, and the consequences are enormous," said one driver who was arrested with a BAC of 0.061.

Source: The Columbus Dispatch, December 21, 2007

#### **Vehicle Recalls Jump 25 Percent in 2007**

The number of vehicles recalled this year rose more than 25 percent, with the biggest recalls involving mostly older models. About 14 million vehicles were recalled in 2007, compared to a little more than 11 million in 2006. A Ford recall that involved 5.5 million vehicles, most for the cruise control deactivation switch, contributed to the jump. The other five major automakers saw recall numbers decline.

#### **Researchers Create Model To Show how Driver's Actions Can Cause Backups for Miles**

Mathematicians from the universities of Exeter, Bristol and Budapest have developed a model to show how major road delays occur. The model demonstrates how a driver slowing down while reacting to something on the roadway can cause backups miles down the road. The traffic jam creates a backward traveling wave. According to the model, heavy traffic does not have to lead to congestion and can be smooth flowing. The findings are published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society. For more information, go to [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/lifestyle/mathematicians-develop-model-to-solve-traffic-jam-mystery\\_1009552.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/lifestyle/mathematicians-develop-model-to-solve-traffic-jam-mystery_1009552.html) Source: Thaindian News, December 20, 2007

#### **Review Looks into Fatigue Monitoring, Detection**

Research suggests that factors such as psychological, physiological and performance based changes in drivers can help monitor and detect fatigue. A recent paper reviews literature concerning these measures and discusses their limitations and the implications they have for traffic safety. More research is needed before fatigue detection/warning systems are installed in vehicles.



### **Drivers Who Use Cell Phones Report Other Risky Driving Habits**

Researchers used annual telephone surveys to compare risky driving behaviors between those who use a cell phone behind the wheel and those who do not. They found that cell phone using drivers were more likely to report driving while drowsy, going 20 miles per hour over the speed limit, driving after a few drinks and other risky behaviors. They were also more likely to have been in a crash or cited for a traffic offense. Campaigns that combine enforcement with public education might be effective in reaching cell phone using drivers, who resemble aggressive drivers.

### **Cars Become Main Event at Electronics Show**

Because the car has emerged as an area of personal entertainment, the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas will feature vehicle gadgets. "Car makers are beginning to realize that consumer electronics and gadgets are becoming a factor in selling a car," an analyst said. General Motors CEO Rick Wagoner will give the first keynote speech by an auto executive. GM also will show its most advanced concept cars. Another expected highlight of the show is more advanced navigation systems. For more information, go to

<http://www.lasvegassun.com/sunbin/stories/business/2007/dec/24/566679769.html>

Source: Las Vegas Sun, December 24, 2007

### **Study Compares Driving Anger in Several Countries**

A new paper compares driving anger in Canada with the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. Researchers surveyed students at a Canadian university using the Driver Anger Scale. Anger is one factor that contributes to aggressive driving, and anger arousal varies because of differences in the social, economic and political climate.

### **News from USDOT**

#### **Drunk Driving Fatalities Spike during Winter Holidays**

The number of alcohol-involved fatalities increases during the Christmas and New Year's holiday periods, new federal traffic safety data shows. From 2001-2005 the average number of alcohol-related crashes in the United States was 36—that number increases to 45 during the Christmas period and 54 over New Year's. In addition, a higher percentage of fatalities are alcohol-related during those holidays than the year as a whole. To help lower those numbers, an intensive drunk driving enforcement and advertising campaign ran through New Year's Eve. A copy of the statistical analysis is available at <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/810870.PDF>

#### **NHTSA Adds Instruments to List of Breath Testing Devices**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration updated the list of instruments that conform to model specifications for Evidential Breath Testing Devices. Six devices were added to the Conforming Products List. To see the list, go to [http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc/testingpubs/20071217\\_CPL\\_EBT.pdf](http://www.dot.gov/ost/dapc/testingpubs/20071217_CPL_EBT.pdf)

#### **U.S. DOT Seeks Information about Technology To Reduce Congestion, Improve Safety**

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Research and Innovative Technology Administration (RITA) put out a request for information about technology applications that can fight congestion, improve safety and heighten performance of the country's transportation system. After receiving input from private industry, research organizations and state and local governments, RITA will identify applications and potential partners for SafeTrip-21, a field test of technologies that will be unveiled at the 2008 Intelligent Transportation Systems World Congress. SafeTrip-21 uses real-time safety warnings, traffic information and advanced navigational tools to prevent accidents and alleviate congestion.



### **FMCSA Proposes Training Rule for New Drivers**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration added hands-on training to its mandatory requirements for new CDL drivers. The requirement appears in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking published in the Federal Register on Dec. 26, 2007.

### **Advanced Technology Could Help Older Drivers Become Safer Drivers**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration is researching several technological advancements that could help make vehicles safer for older drivers. Decreased visual performance, restricted head and neck movement and slower reaction times are common among older drivers and affect their driving performance. Older drivers also make up a chunk of car consumers, with 21 percent of new-car buyers in 2006 age 65 and up. Any advanced technologies that can help older drivers, such as night vision enhancement, advanced headlighting, adaptive cruise control, lane departure warning, navigational systems and parking aids, can help younger drivers as well. For the technology to benefit drivers of all ages, it must be comfortable and easy to use so it does not create additional distraction.

For more information, go to <http://www.tfhrc.gov/pubrds/07nov/02.htm>

Source: Public Roads, November/December 2007

### **New Rule Makes Highway Signs Brighter, Safer**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) created a new rule that requires states to use higher performing reflective materials on all highway signs and public agencies to maintain signs so they can be read from greater distances. "The new standards will make highway signs as visible as possible to drivers in low-light conditions," FHWA Administrator J. Richard Capka said. The new requirements can be found in the 2nd edition of the 2003 Manual of Traffic Control Devices. For more information, go to [www.fhwa.dot.gov/retro](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/retro)

### **Work-Home**

### **Safety Belt Poster Contest Open to Truck Drivers' Children**

Children of truck drivers can participate in a poster contest to encourage commercial truck vehicle drivers to buckle up behind the wheel. Although 81 percent of the general driving population wears a safety belt, only 59 percent of commercial vehicle drivers buckle up. The poster contest is part of a national campaign called "Be Ready. Be Buckled." The winner will receive a \$1,000 savings bond and be recognized on May 5 during North American Occupational Safety and Health Week. "If truck drivers won't buckle up for themselves, it's my hope that they will at least do it for their families and children as they go about their daily routine of moving America," said John H. Hill, administrator of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration. Contest rules and entry forms are available at

[www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/safetybelt)

### **Almost Half of Parents Say Minimum Driving Age Should Be 17**

Researchers interviewed about 300 parents in 2006 to assess decision making about the timing of when teenagers start driving and found that most teens obtained permits and took road tests within the first few months after they were eligible. Reasons for delays were fulfilling driver's education requirements and lack of maturity/readiness. A third to a half of the parents surveyed thought minimum licensure age should be 17 or older. Parents who weren't interested in monitoring devices for their teens said they trusted their children or respected their privacy.



### **Study Finds Rear-Facing Seats More Effective than Forward-Facing**

Children younger than 2 years old in forward-facing car seats were more likely to be seriously injured than children in rear-facing car seats in all crash types, researchers found in a recent study. They compared the two different types of seats by extracting data from a crash database from 1988-2003. Forward-facing children in side crashes and those 1 year old and younger were much more likely to be seriously injured. Effectiveness estimates for rear-facing seats were 15 percent higher than forward-facing seats.

### **House Committee Approves Bill that Addresses Vehicle Safety for Children**

The House Energy and Commerce Committee approved a bill that requires the government to address several vehicle safety threats to children. Federal regulators would have to find ways to diminish blind spots in pickups and large SUVs, to prevent vehicles from rolling away and to make power windows safer. About four children die a day from strangulation from power windows, being left alone in hot cars or in backovers. An agreement with automakers calls for brake interlock systems in all new cars by September 2010 to prevent rollaways. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration would have to issue a final rule within three years if the bill passes.

### **International Traffic Safety News**

#### **Brain-game Professor Teams up with Toyota To Create Cars for Seniors**

The same professor who developed brain games for Nintendo is working with Toyota to develop intelligent cars that will help older drivers. Professor Ryuta Kawashima, a scientist at Tohoku University, is part of the joint study group that is working on a system that can determine drivers' patterns and curb dangerous behaviors. If the system sense the driver is hitting the gas pedal for no reason, it could automatically slow down the car. "Ultimately, we hope to develop cars that stimulate brain activity, so that driving itself becomes a form of brain training," Kawashima said. No specific technologies are ready to be announced yet. For more information, go to

<http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2007/12/18/business/AS-TEC-Japan-Toyota-Elderly-Cars.php>

Source: Associated Press, December 18, 2007

#### **Quebec Issues New Driving Laws that Take Effect in 2008**

The Canadian province of Quebec has mandated winter tires, banned hand-held cell phones and required speed governors on trucks. A movement to lower the blood-alcohol limit from 0.08 to 0.05 percent failed. Under the new law, vehicles registered in the province must have winter tires from Nov. 15 to April 15. Drivers must stop using hand-held cell phones Jan. 1, and new drivers must take certified driver's education classes. Heavy trucks will need to use speed governors with a maximum of 60 miles per hour. Quebec also will start a pilot program next year that installs photo radars and cameras at traffic lights in 15 communities. For more information, go to

[http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top\\_News/2007/12/20/quebec\\_legislates\\_snow\\_tires\\_no\\_phones/2844/](http://www.upi.com/NewsTrack/Top_News/2007/12/20/quebec_legislates_snow_tires_no_phones/2844/)

Source: United Press International, December 20, 2007

#### **UK's Crown Prosecution Services Releases Changes to Bad Driving Policy**

The Crown Prosecution Service published changes to its policy on bad driving, which includes a new guidance on what constitutes dangerous driving and a better service from prosecutors to grieving families. Now a charge of dangerous driving will be the starting point for using a cell phone while driving when there's clear evidence it led to harm. Dangerous driving could also include racing, disregarding warnings from fellow passengers, reading a newspaper or map and driving aggressively. A charge of careless driving could come from tailgating, tuning the car radio or distracted driving. Flashing lights at other vehicles or splashing pedestrians through puddles is considered inconsiderate





driving. For more information go to <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/7153070.stm> or [http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/180\\_07.html](http://www.cps.gov.uk/news/pressreleases/180_07.html).

Source: The Crown Prosecution Service, December 20, 2007

### **Training Course Helps Drivers from Foreign Countries**

Peak Performance has developed a new training course to help fleet managers who employ foreign drivers. The course is an introduction to driving in the United Kingdom, including vehicle familiarization and safety checks, a license review, eyesight check and assessment of each driver's current practices. "Differences in driving practices, signs and speed limits between the UK and the countries from which these people come can give rise to some problems," Peak Performance's sales and marketing director said. "The result is higher accident rates amongst this group of drivers, which can have many consequences." Source: FleetNews, December 18, 2007

### **Survey Reveals Risks Fleet Drivers Face**

Fleet managers identified three risky areas for their drivers: other road users (24 percent) followed closely by distracting equipment and then pressure to meet deadlines at work. The findings from the National Car Rental/Fleet News survey suggest a total ban on using a phone while driving should be considered. Of the fleet managers surveyed, 11 percent felt their own drivers' poor skills posed a major risk to their safety. More than half of the managers said their business is ready for the new Corporate Manslaughter Bill that's three months away from becoming law.

Source: FleetNews, December 18, 2007

### **Thousands of Company Drivers Plan To Continue Cell Phone Use**

Under new rules published by the Crown Prosecution Service, drivers risk two years of jail time for using their phones. But a new survey suggests thousands of company car drivers still will take calls behind the wheel. Even using a hands-free phone can lead to a charge of dangerous driving. The survey from Alphabet found that three out of 10 drivers currently use phones while driving, and a quarter plan to continue even when the new rule goes into effect.

Source: FleetNews, December 18, 2007

### **Cheap Breathalyzers Not Always Reliable**

Some service stations in the United Kingdom sell inexpensive breathalyzers customers can use as a guide, but company car drivers are warned not to count on them to be consistently accurate. Although the devices come with a disclaimer, many drivers may miss the small print and use them as a definite indicator of whether they should drive after drinking. "Even if it is accurate, your level could be rising as you absorb the alcohol, leaving you 'over' by the time you drive," an alcohol awareness expert said.

Source: FleetNews, December 19, 2007

### **Driver Pledges Offer Safety, Legal Benefits**

Before the Corporate Manslaughter Act comes into effect next year, fleet managers should encourage their drivers to sign safety pledges. The pledges are designed to engage drivers during the training process, but they also offer some legal protection for businesses. Some large companies already ask their drivers to sign documents showing they've been through a driver training program and agree to drive safely and follow the rules of the road. "The pledges are legally binding in the sense of being evidence that a fleet manager has acted in a diligent way towards his drivers," the ACFO regional secretary said. Road safety charity Brake offers template pledges.

Source: FleetNews, December 19, 2007



### **Poll Finds Drunk Driving Progress at Standstill in Canada**

Progress in reducing the drunk driving problem in Canada has halted, according to a new poll by the Traffic Injury Research Foundation (TIRF). The indicators used to gauge progress showed little change, but an indicator for the percentage of Canadians who drove over the limit rose to 8.2 from 5.6 percent in 2004. Repeat drunk drivers are a major contributor to the halted progress. Drivers who drink also seem to be unconcerned with the problem, because they do not correlate drunk driving with increased chances of a crash. The poll also found more than 80 percent of Canadians support mandatory ignition interlocks and immediate impoundment for drinking drivers. The results can be found in The Road Safety Monitor 2007: Drinking and Driving and is available at [www.trafficinjuryresearch.com](http://www.trafficinjuryresearch.com)